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PATHOS OF THE CAREER OF JOHN DONOGHUE, SCULPTOR

The tragic death of John Donoghue, the sculptor, adds another name to the long list of men of high talents who, for some reason or other, failing to achieve the recognition that would give them success, have been driven to melancholy endings. Donoghue was long well known in Chicago, New York, and Boston, and was heartily liked for the genuine nature of his art and his lovable personal qualities. He lacked, however, the stamina to bear up against and overcome adversity, and finally misfortune drove him to a suicide's grave.

Donoghue was "discovered" in Chicago by Oscar Wilde, on his

first visit to this country, more than twenty years ago. Wilde saw the promise of rare plastic talent in the youth that Donoghue then was, and the attention thus drawn to him enabled him to pursue his studies abroad. Returning to this country, he was active in Boston for some time. The exhibition of his work in Horticultural Hall in that city was a notable affair. His "Young Sophocles" was an uncommonly beautiful piece of work. While in Boston he modeled his statue, "The Boxer," studied from John L. Sullivan, but much idealized. Going abroad again,



WHISTLER PORTRAIT, No. 5
By Mortimer Menpes
From an Etching

he there modeled a colossal statue. "The Spirit," or something of that sort, for the World's Fair at Chicago. It was said to be a most impressive work. But by some mistake it was forwarded too late, no arrangements had been made to receive it, and it was left on the dock at Brooklyn, a huge bill for transshipment confronting the artist. It was too big to do anything with, and it was probably broken up to get it out of the way.

The keen disappointment that resulted from this disastrous outcome of a really unselfish and patriotic endeavor to honor his country and his native city, was perhaps the thing that determined his decline. He went to Boston for a while, and modeled the bust of John Boyle O'Reilly that marks the poet's grave in Holyrood cemetery. O'Reilly had been a warm friend of the sculptor. Donoghue then went to New York, and little was heard of him until his suicide at New Haven.

Chicago art students, when they learned of his death, placed a white wreath on Donoghue's statue of "Young Sophocles" in the Art Institute, thus silently paying tribute to the genius of a Chicago sculptor whose career was at once curious, fantastic, and tragic. At the age of forty-two, but in appearance a man much older, Donoghue closed a career that had begun with great promise, but that practically ended when the great achievement of his life, as above stated, was shattered into fragments in a Brooklyn stoneyard to get rid of it.

This was really the death of a wonderful idea, since nothing of



WHISTLER PORTRAIT, No. 6
By Mortimer Menpes
From an Etching

the statue remains to-day but in the memory of a very few who had seen it under construction in Rome. There was no miniature of it, nor had it ever been photographed. And only a part of it was shipped to this country. It is simply a masterpiece forever lost.



WHISTLER PORTRAIT, No. 7
By Mortimer Menpes
From an Etching

The story of this tragedy in artistic endeavor is worthy telling, and I tell it largely in the words of a recently published account. It was Donoghue's dream to be represented in his native city by a great work of art. When the arrangements for the World's Fair were going forward, he conceived the idea for an immense statue to be known as "The Spirit," representing the spirit of the world hovering over chaos. Milton is said to have been the inspiration. When assured that such a statue would be acceptable to the fair commissioners, Donoghue, then in Rome, set to work with great enthusiasm.

The work was of heroic proportions, and some idea of its magnitude may be imagined from the length of the wings of the figure, which measured thirty feet from tip to tip. The statue was to have been brought to this country by the government and on board the Constellation. About the time the work was nearing completion the Constellation arrived in Rome.

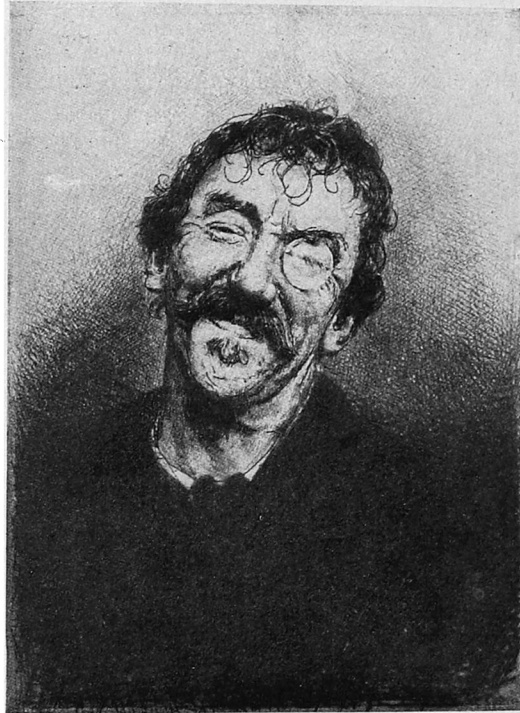
The artist asked for a month's time, but it was impossible for the vessel to remain. It was ordered home. When the statue was finally ready the government did not find it convenient to transport it. But Donoghue had friends in his native country, and it was determined to

bring it here by private subscription. After considerable effort on the part of friends the necessary money was at last secured.

Part of the statue was finally sent, but it got no nearer Chicago than Brooklyn, where it was placed in storage. In the succeeding arrangements for the opening of the World's Fair Donoghue's work was lost sight of.

The exact nature of the artistic catastrophe has never been made known, but for over a year half of the statue remained in Rome and half in Brooklyn. When Donoghue came to this country to personally look after his interests, it was too late to do anything. He made numerous appeals, but they apparently came to nothing. He was poor, and his former patrons had done all that was possible for him. Finally that part of the statue in Brooklyn was broken up to pay storage charges. The half of the statue left in Rome has never been accounted for. It likewise was probably broken up.

The failure to show his work to the public caused Donoghue grievous disappointment. He lost enthusiasm and ambition. Although he had produced a number of works that had taken rank while he was abroad he could not again settle to work after "The Spirit" had been shattered. For a time he worked for New York architects, and several large office buildings there are ornamented with specimens of his artistic skill. Recently he began to give serious study to psychical subjects, and was at work, when he killed himself, on a book to be



WHISTLER PORTRAIT, No. 8
By Mortimer Menpes
From an Etching

called "The New Religion." Within the past two years he had been lost sight of by his Chicago acquaintances and former patrons.

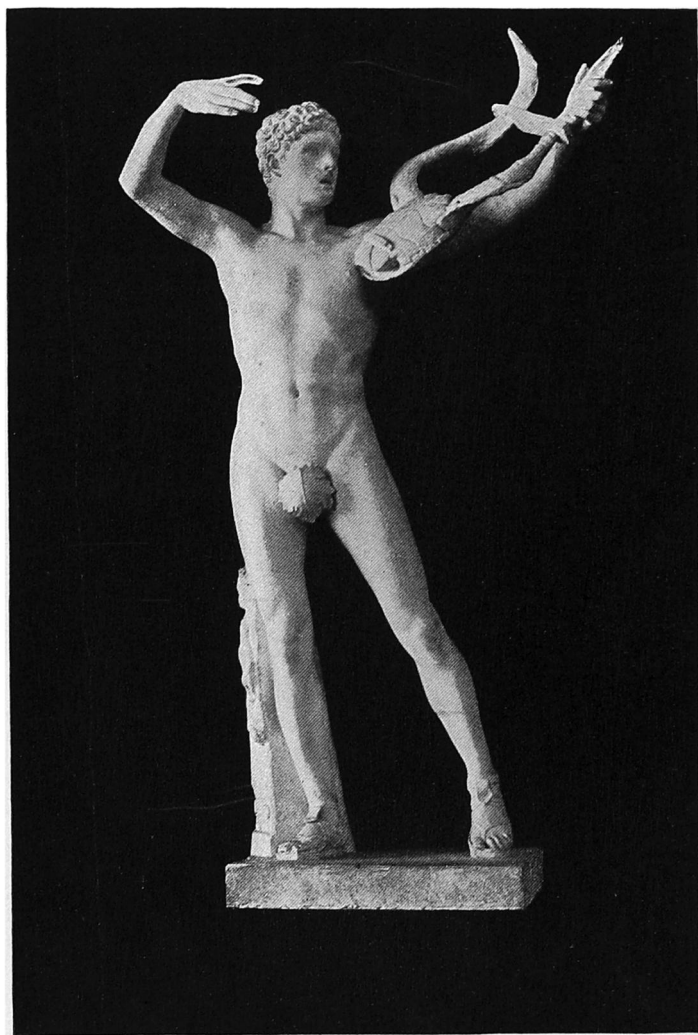
A closing word of biography. Donoghue was born in Chicago, and it was here that the greatest encouragement was given him during his early and promising career. He studied in a local atelier and then went to Paris, where he was a pupil of Falguière. It is said that this move was made possible by the great confidence accorded him by Chicago patronesses to whose notice he was brought. Memories of young Donoghue are of a handsome, witty person, with an irresistibly appealing manner. He walked into the affections of people. His time was much occupied socially, but for all this he had a serious purpose in view, and if he worked only when the mood of the artist came upon him, it must be said that he by no means lacked industry.

Up to one point in his career his manner was simple and unaffected. There was a deviation when he gained the friendship of Oscar Wilde, above referred to. The English apostle of æstheticism was on a lecturing tour of the United States. He visited Chicago and flattered young Donoghue with his attention. When he departed he left in the young sculptor an enthusiastic disciple of his cult, and this was shortly shown in marked eccentricities.

Donoghue progressed rapidly under Falguière in Paris. His talent showed itself at once, and in 1884 he exhibited in the Salon a "Phædra" which was striking enough to find a ready purchaser. He then went to Rome, and there produced the "Young Sophocles," which won great praise from critics. The owner of this statue is said to be a wealthy American, that now on exhibition at the Chicago Art Institute being a copy. Indeed, so popular was this work that many replicas were made. His claim to fame rests principally on the "Young Sophocles," which is here reproduced, and it was this success that inspired him to take up the work of "The Spirit" as his masterpiece.

From the time he conceived the idea until "The Spirit" was finished Donoghue worked with great seriousness of purpose and with intense enthusiasm. The series of disappointments that followed the completion of the statue and the end of his dream to give to his native city a great work completely shattered the sculptor. After the last hope was gone and the statue destroyed, he experienced a fatalistic lack of confidence. "My career ended with 'The Spirit,'" Donoghue is credited with saying a short time before his death, to a friend who had urged him again to endeavor. "For so, too, has my spirit been shattered. I feel that my work is done

J. C. McCORD.



YOUNG SOPHOCLES
By John Donoghue
See Article on Donoghue

